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Caring Connections

An update for Friends Supporters

Esophageal Motility System provides accurate diagnosis of problems with the esophagus

Your Donor Dollars at Work!

A lot of people enjoy going to a restaurant for a meal with friends. But for 28-year-old Julien Bourgeois of Riverview, being able to participate in such a social experience is a treat he won't take for granted.

That's because he has vivid memories of his life as a teenager when such an occasion would have been impossible for him. He was only 16 when he began to experience acid reflux so severely that he and those around him thought he was having a heart attack. "I had trouble swallowing all the time; I was always regurgitating my food," he recalled.

An **Esophageal Motility System** was used to confirm that Julien had a condition known as achalasia. It is a rare disease of the muscle of the lower esophageal body and the lower esophageal sphincter that prevents relaxation of the sphincter and an absence of contractions, or peristalsis, of the esophagus.

Diagnosis of such problems is even more accurate now with the replacement of older leased technology with a new \$115,000 system purchased by donated funds. Dr. Mohammad Al-Karain, gastroenterologist, explained that the new equipment is an advanced test to check motility in the esophagus. In a person without a problem, contractions propel their food and fluid down the esophagus. But if these contractions don't happen or don't work properly, the result is some form of esophageal motility disorder, such as achalasia as in Bourgeois's case.

"We are able to see clearly what kind of contractions the patient is experiencing when they are having difficulty swallowing," said Al-Karain. "We also use the system on most esophageal surgeries. It is helpful to use before hiatal hernia surgery to check and ensure there are abnormal contractions."

The system works by having a thin, pressure sensitive tube inserted through a patient's nose, along the back of their throat, down the esophagus, and into the stomach to help locate any areas of difficulty.

While the hospital was leasing a system, it was a decade old and had become outdated. The new system is more reliable and much more accurate, Al-Karain explained. "It is very useful for many esophageal surgeries. It can play a role in diagnosis and treatment of conditions that impact a patient's ability to swallow their food."

The specialist said he uses the new equipment on between 10 to 20 patients a month and there are three other doctors using it as well. Well over 130 patients are expected to benefit from this new technology every year.

For Bourgeois as with so many other patients, an accurate diagnosis opened the door to successful treatment.

"Now I can actually go out with my friends and have a meal in a restaurant," says Bourgeois.



Grateful patient Julien Bourgeois and Dr. Mohammad Al-Karain in GI Clinic